

Future Focused Faith

Introduction

Tomorrow is Father's Day and as you have probably already noticed, I am terrible with remembering holidays. I almost forgot about the Easter message. I almost forgot Mother's Day, and now I almost forgot Father's Day. So today we will still be digging into the rest of Chapter 8 of Romans, but first I want to talk to the men.

This is my first Father's day. I have a baby boy named Haddon who is the greatest thing in the world outside of Jesus and my wife, Tracy. Today I am proud to be a dad. We have another poppa with us today, my brother, Jeremy. We were married in the same summer and had kids in the same autumn. It's good to be a dad. But, we also have men who have not experienced the greatness of being a daddy. And so my charge tonight for our poppas is about being men.

Masculinity

In our culture masculinity is lacking and femininity is rising. This is especially true in the Church. Churches cater to the needs of women with incredible programs for women's ministry. They cater to kids with incredible programs. They do not cater to men as often because men have simply stopped going to church. Men have stopped leading their families. Men have stopped being leaders.

Feminism is still at large. I don't think it is because women have just started to hate men. That has been around forever. I think it is because men have emasculated themselves. Men have stopped leading and have started submitting. Men have concentrated on being professionals more than being family men. Men have become more and more open to homosexuality, the very opposite of masculinity. Men have become more and more open to the idea of the 'stay-at-home dad.' Men aren't expected to be men but have been given an 'equal' status that has diminished the male leadership in the home. The role of men is in jeopardy.

Men, if you think that being a man is watching the game, drinking a beer, scratching, and thinking about sex all day, you are terribly wrong. Being a man is loving Jesus, loving your woman, loving your kids, and being a leader. I've discussed this before, but let's look at again on this Father's Day.

1. A Biblical Man Loves Jesus.

There are two things that make a real man cry - family death and Jesus. If their kid dies, they cry. If Jesus breaks them and convicts them of sin, they cry. The only way a real man is going to hug another man is because of Jesus. Jesus makes men do things they usually don't and it's because the men love Jesus. The bumper sticker is gay, but the saying is true - Real Men Love Jesus.

Real men rid themselves of laziness to do the work of Jesus. They rid themselves of lustful patterns to love their wives with the love of Jesus. They rid themselves of impatience to love their kids with the love of Jesus. They rid themselves of pride and arrogance so they can love lost people with the love of Jesus. They do all of this because they love Jesus.

2. They Love Their Wives.

If a man doesn't love his wife, he probably doesn't love Jesus. There are several passages in Scripture like Ephesians 5 where men are told to love their wives with the love that Christ has for the church. Passages like Colossians 3.19 that simply say - Love your wives and don't be harsh. A real man takes his wife out to dinner. A real man buys his wife clothes. A real man communicates well with his wife. A real man romances his wife instead of being lazy and then complaining about not getting sex. A real man has an emotional connection with his wife that no other man can have. A real man loves his wife.

3. They Love Their Kids.

If a man doesn't love his kids, he probably doesn't love Jesus. In the same passages that men are told to love their wives, they are told to be good dads. "Don't provoke your

kids or they will become discouraged." "Don't provoke your kids to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Don't just send your kids to their rooms, but lovingly instruct them in the Lord. Be patient with your kids and tell them you love them - on purpose. Take your kids out individually and do something that they love to do. Take your boys out to ball games and to the dump so they can find useless, but cool junk. Take your girls out to tea or shopping or go for a walk or go swimming (sorry, I don't have a girl).

Real men love their kids.

4. They Provide For Their Families.

"If a man doesn't provide for his family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Men are to lead their homes in finances, emotions, spirituality, et cetera. This is what John Piper says about male provision: "If bread is not on the table, a man figures out how to put it there."

Are you teaching your wife Scripture and theology? Or do you leave up to the church's women's ministry? Do you teach your kids Scripture and theology? Or do you leave it up to the babysitter, er, youth pastor? (I would guess that any youth pastor in America would say they would give up their jobs if that meant dads would actually teach their

kids the things of God - youth pastors, prove me wrong if you wish).

Real men provide for their family financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

5. They Work Hard.

Real men work hard. In Deuteronomy, hard working church leaders are compared to oxen. Oxen are those big beasts who carry a large load all day and never tire. This is what real men are like. They work hard to provide for their family, they work hard to advance the church's ministry, and they work hard because they are men.

This is an important message for our culture because we live in the laziest of days.

Home-based businesses sound good to men of our day because it means they can get rich fast and never work again so they can wake up at 11 and watch Judge Judy, Divorce Court, Dr. Phil, and maybe even Oprah if they feel gay enough. Men are lazy. They turn on the TV, tune out the family, watch the game and drink too much. Real men get up off the couch and go to work - whether that be for the church, for the corporation, or for their family.

6. They Love Their Church.

Real men love their churches. Real men do not church hop. Real men commit to God's

mission through a local church body and roll up their sleeves and get dirt on their hands.

Real men would take a bullet for their pastor, because their pastor is worth it to them.

Real men embrace vision and work hard to bring that vision to fruition.

They do not nominate themselves for church leadership only to have a more effective way to complain. They nominate themselves for church leadership because they want to work hard and because they have the back of the pastor. Real Churches impact the lives of men and initiate life-change in those men.

Real men love their church.

These are the men I want in my church and who I challenge you to be. The saying is true - Just as the men go, so goes the culture. Or better yet - Just as the men go, so goes the church. The Church needs more authentic, missional, and Jesus centered men to roll up their sleeves and be men who lead.

Intro to Text

Although I could probably end there tonight, we still have Romans 8 sitting in front us begging to be looked at.

For you that were not here last week, let's recap. Last Saturday we discussed the ministry of the Spirit in our lives. If you do not have the Spirit, you do not have Christ.

But if you have Christ, you have the Spirit and he is dwelling in you now. He aids you in ridding yourself of sin and living according to his leading. The Spirit is required for you to live a holy life. And if you do not trust in Jesus, you do not have the Spirit and therefore, do not have life and you are not holy.

This Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life is evidence of us being in God's family - his sons and daughters. And if we are sons, we have become co-heirs with Christ, the Son of God. Heirs to what? To the glorious inheritance of eternal existence with God at the end of time.

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:15

In other words, Christ has died on our behalf, taking all of God's wrath that was intended for us and placing it on his own Son, who is fully God. This has enabled those who trust in him to receive the promised inheritance of eternal life with God. This death has also redeemed us from our past sins.

This is the gospel. In order for us to understand the future focused faith we have, we must understand what gives us a hopeful future - the gospel. The gospel in short form is

people suck, but God is good. Let's unpack that:

All of humanity, men and women, have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). They were created in his likeness and were given dominion over other created things and were able to walk with God in the Garden of Eden. But something went terribly wrong. Man sinned against God and that sin spread to all of humanity (Romans 5:12). Like an injected poison, death spread to all humanity and the symptoms are prevelant: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these (Galatians 5:19-21).

This sin led to humanity's depravity. Paul says that all people everywhere are under sin (Romans 3:9). This means that men everywhere are "slaves to sin." They are in bondage to it. They have no power over it. That's why Paul can say that "No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one (Romans 3:10-12). If something big doesn't happen, everyone is going to die!

But there is good news (that's exactly what the word "gospel" means!). The righteousness of God is available to you by putting your trust in Jesus Christ to save you from your sin (Romans 3:22). You may be asking, "But how is this possible? From what you just said, I'm unable to put my trust in Jesus!" But that is the beauty of Grace. The greatest verses in the entire Bible answer that question:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. Romans 3:23-25

The word “propitiation” is an incredible word. You see, if you do not put your trust in Jesus, you store up wrath (God’s righteous anger) for yourself that will be given to you at the end of time (Romans 2:5). But if you trust in Jesus, God placed that wrath onto his only Son instead of you! Now you do not have to suffer that wrath anymore! (Romans 5:9) Because “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!” (Romans 8:1) Christ took that punishment for you on the cross when he died for your sins (Romans 5:8). Not only did he die for your sins, but he was resurrected from the dead so that you could have life. (Romans 6:4)

Now that you have heard the good news of Jesus Christ, it is your turn to respond. Turn from your sins (Acts 17:30) and trust in Jesus to save you from yourself.

Will you trust Jesus for that tonight?

Tonight we are going to be focusing on the future hope we have in our future resurrection, despite of our circumstances. Christianity is a forward moving, forward thinking concept. **We are eagerly anticipating something that revolutionizes the way we live right now. Our confident expectation in our resurrection makes this**

life peaceful and enjoyable. When your life seems terrible; when you owe two months' rent; when you lose a family member; when are diagnosed with an illness; when your body is damaged beyond repair; when you lose your job, what gives you hope? That tomorrow will come? Tomorrow will bring it's own trouble. Is that what Jesus said? "Tomorrow can worry about itself." (Matthew 6:34) The only hope we have can be found in Jesus and the future he promises those who are found in him.

Text

. . . and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for

what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Body

Suffering

Last week I left you hanging after the first half of verse 17. Our last point was that we have become God's children and co-heirs with Christ. But now Paul gives a conditional statement to those statements - "if you suffer." What is suffering for a Christian? We could spend hours and hours of discussion on this one topic, but for our time tonight, let me simply define it. **Suffering for a Christian is enduring adversity, affliction,**

conflict, mistreatment, and the like with a humble attitude in grace while awaiting the future hope we have in our resurrection. This will make more and more sense as we get deeper in the study tonight. So let's push further.

Why do we suffer? "So that we may be glorified in him." When we suffer, we are being refined and purified. When we suffer we are being molded by God. That's why James can say "Count it all joy when you encounter trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." (James 1:2-3). This is why Paul can say in the next verse, "I consider that the present sufferings cannot compare and are not even worthy enough to compare to the glory we will experience."

You may be here tonight in the middle of a horrible time in your life, but if you have your hope and trust in Jesus, that is not worth comparing to the glory you will experience in the future. That is why our faith is future focused. It is fixed on that glory at the end of time.

Sharing in Glory

What does it mean when Paul says, "so that we may also be *glorified* with him"? While we now share in the sufferings of Christ, we will share in his glory. If you take a few hours and read through Revelation you will see glimpses of Christ's exalted glory. Many times the people present with the exalted Christ praise him and glorify his name. We will be there. You will be there if you believe.

In 18, Paul says that suffering is nothing to be compared to "the glory that will be revealed to us." Although we experience hard times now, we will experience the glory of Christ in the end. The glory of Christ is his exalted state above all of creation and his kingship, in which he will rule over all things. Jesus is not only a humble Galilean peasant, but is now the exalted ruler over all nations who is at war with those who oppose him and in love with those who love him.

Creation

In verse 19 Paul introduces a section of this passage that describes creation's role in glorification. Glorification is not simply human, but it also stretches to creation. Creation is anticipating our glorification. The word used for "eager longing" is a word that means to have your head raised and your eyes fixed on a certain thing. For the creation, this event is our resurrection. When we are resurrected, that signals that their perfection is also on its way.

The earth must be perfected. It is wasting away, or as Paul puts it, "decaying." We have tornadoes, tsunamis, hurricanes, global warming, and on and on... The creation is waiting for the day when that will all stop and it will be redeemed.

But why is the earth in decay? It was placed under a curse by God because of Adam's

sin. If you remember back to the story of the fall of humanity, Adam and Eve both ate of the fruit and they saw their own nakedness (which is a symbol of their sin) and tried to hide from God. But God found them and gave curses to them as well as the serpent in Genesis 3. He tells the serpent that enmity is between him and the woman and she will bring forth a Son who will crush his head - the very first mention of Christ in the Scriptures. He then tells the woman that when she has babies, it's going to hurt like crazy. God also tells her that she want to rule her husband, but her husband is to rule over her. And then God turns to Adam, the person responsible for our entire depraved humanity and says, "*The ground is cursed because of your sin. It will be painful for you to work the ground and eat the fruit. The ground will bring you thorns and thistles.*" So from this point in our early history the creation is under a curse that causes thorns, thistles, windstorms, tornadoes, tsunamis, hurricanes, etc. that bring destruction to the earth and man. So when another disaster happens, whatever it is, it is because of sin and we must repent of our sins and turn to Jesus so that he will save us.

One day, creation will be freed from all of the destruction and decay and we will live on a new earth and reign with Christ. But until then, creation is longing in agony for that day to come. In fact, Paul compares creation to a pregnant woman who groans in childbirth. Tracy and I had our first son in October - his name is Haddon. Tracy was in labor for 10 hours before they called an emergency C-section. While we were in that room, I saw Tracy go through the most pain I've ever seen. She almost broke my hand and probably wanted to cuss me out for not being better help. She was wincing and groaning and was

beyond anxious for Haddon to be born.

That's exactly how creation is now. It's groaning - the wind is blowing, the rain is falling, the sun is beating down. It's awaiting the future hope in the Creator and Sustainer of the universe - Jesus.

Awaiting the Hope

In 23, Paul turns from the creation to believers. And not only creation, but us as well! The only people who have the ministry of the Spirit are believers. We asked the question last week, "Do you have the Spirit?" If you could answer 'yes' then you have the Jesus as well, but if not, you do not have Christ. Now there is another aspect to that question. If you do not have the Spirit, you do not have a resurrection, and if you do not have a resurrection, you do not have hope.

If you are a Christian, you cannot wait for the day when Christ returns and takes us with him. You cannot wait for the day when you receive new bodies. Some of us have terrible bodies with problems and problems and problems. We all have something flawed with our bodies. We have bum knees, bad backs, bad vision, no hair - we all have stuff wrong with us. And we who have the future hope in Christ are eagerly waiting for the day that is promised us. Paul says that we are groaning inwardly. In other words, our souls yearn for the day when we will be with the Lord.

And this is the hope that is saving. Hope in Jesus is the only hope we can have. We cannot rest our hope in people - they fail us. We cannot rest our hope in material things - they fail us. Who in this room doesn't have a beater for a car? Most of us have crappy cars. Most of our stuff is worn out and dying- just like us. We cannot hope in anything but Jesus.

Because of the confidence that comes with our hope in Christ we are able to incredible patience. You know the saying, "patience is a virtue"? No, patience is a gift from God that can only be fulfilled in the hope of future grace. You can't be patient with your kids, friends, or parents, so how can we be patient for years and years for our Messiah to rescue us from this place? Only by God's help and the power that is in our future hope.

The Presently Active Spirit in Prayer

While we are patiently for that day, we presently have the ministry of the Spirit to help us. Have you ever felt like you didn't know how to pray? I hope that you spend time each day in prayer. But when you do, sometimes you will feel like this. What the heck am I supposed to say? Well, when you feel like this, Paul says that the Holy Spirit of God is interceding for you with groaning prayers that we cannot even understand. The same way we groan for the Lord to come is the same way the Spirit is praying for us - with confidence and expectation.

The Spirit prays for us. The Spirit wants good for you. The Spirit wants you to see the will of God especially when you are enduring suffering.

Promise #1 - For Those Who Love Him

The next three verses are promises that help us in our present suffering and in our future hope.

Now we come to one of the texts in Scripture that is quoted out of context the most. Before I read it, I want you to think about what the context is. What have we been discussing so far? Suffering and a future hope. Keep this in mind while I read.

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

First, believers love God. Second, believers are chosen by God's calling. These are the people that God blesses. All things are for the good of the believer. Suffering, trials, struggles, sickness, all work for the good of the Christian.

How? Because in Christ we have future hope and future grace.

This verse does not mean that every Christian wins the lotto and comes into some

settlement money from unjust lawsuits. This does mean that we have hope in what this verse promises: good comes to those who love God.

This warrants a question: Do you love God? Is his call on your life? If you do love God, he works all things for your good. If you do not love God, he does not.

Promise 2 - Being Like Jesus

God knew you before you were even born. He had a plan for you before you were even born. If you are a Christian, this plan was for you to be saved and to be like Jesus.

That's why Paul says, "Those whom he foreknew (knew before time) he also predestined (God's plan for your life) to be conformed to the image of his Son." You were chosen to be like Jesus and his promise to you is that is exactly what will happen. When we share in the glory of Christ as we saw in verses 17 and 18, we will be like him. Presently, through our trials and suffering we are being perfected, but our ultimate perfection will come when we share in his glorious presence.

But why do we need to be like Jesus? So that Jesus would be supreme. "So that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Literally, "So that he would be the prototype." God conforms us to Jesus so that he will be the start of a new race of glorified beings. Christ is exalted and glorified and because he has made a way, we will be glorified as well. He is the King of his Kingdom and we are his subjects and this

Kingdom - Christ, Christians, and creation - will all be gloriously united.

Promise 3 - The Assurance of Salvation

Paul says in Philippians that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion." That is the essence of verse 30.

"Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

God knows the destiny of every human being. And if you have become a Christian this verse is your promise: If you have experienced a call to obey the gospel you have been declared righteous by the only Righteous Being to ever live. And if you have been declared righteous you will also be perfected in your resurrection.

Paul even uses the past tense for all of God's actions: predestined, called, justified, glorified. It is a certain thing that you will be like Christ if you believe. You can now have a confident expectation in it. And this is why Paul can say, "I consider my present suffering not worthy to be compared to the glory I will see in the end."

Whatever it is you are going through, it is nothing compared to what God has for those who love him. Everything that is good, holy, glorious is everything that you will have if

you trust in Christ.

I want to close by reading the rest of the chapter. Keep in mind all that we have discussed tonight. Remember the confident hope and assured salvation that you have if you are a Christian. If you do not believe, try to imagine the opposite of what I read.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.